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THE WORLD MISSION OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH
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by

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"The dominant forces in human history have come from a pursuit of great purposes and the faithful pursuance of great causes." This recent observation of a British statesman might well be made more specific by using it as a formula to interpret the significance of the Christian world movement; for, truly, the greatest of all purposes is to have God's kingdom more fully realized in history through devotion to those causes which implement that purpose. Aside from the sacraments of our faith, nothing will enrich our common spiritual life more profoundly than to be partners in this purpose and colleagues in these causes.

We would think then during this hour about the intention of God in Christ to have the things of His kingdom realized more fully here upon the earth through the devotion of His followers to those causes that make this purpose a thing for rational hope. No theme could have a more logical place in any program of a spiritual conference for Christian ministers and laymen today.

The annual reports of the Board of International Missions in the Blue Book for the Synods, and the materials sent to each pastor in the packet prepared for International Missions emphasis season in January, plus numerous articles on missions in The Messenger relate a vast amount of interesting detail pertaining to each of our seven mission fields. I shall not repeat this here. Let us now seek a synoptic view of the Christian world mission as its principal challenges are illustrated for us in some major aspects of the total overseas effort.

The Church as The Mission

By way of a very apt substitute for the phrase "Let the Church be the Church," it is now being said by some at least, "Let the Church be the Mission." Truly this phrase recaptures something fundamentally germane to the nature of the Church in its witnessing and serving capacities.

No one has stated the matter more lucidly for us in recent times than Dr. John A. Mackay, chairman of the International Missionary Council and president of Princeton Theological Seminary, in his book,"Christianity on the Frontier." This is a book that one cannot read without a notebook at hand, and I beg the privilege of quoting at leangth from some of the gems of thought that I have gleaned from it. This is done too because Dr. Mackay is doing some of the most pertinent thinking on the subject of the Christian world mission of any one I know.

By way of stressing the frontier ministry of the Church, Dr. Mackay says:

> "The Church's place is the frontier. Its destiny is bound up with a frontier life, for that is the life to which God has called it..... When the Church is no longer mobile, when the pioneer spirit has left it, when missionary vision no longer inspires it, when a challenge to high adventure under God fails to awaken a response in prophetic words and redemptive deeds, the Church is dead." p. 42
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> "The Church must stand with Christ on the frontiers of the world, or it will lose Him in the sanctuaries at home." p. 67

Then, by way of defining the frontier, Dr. Mackay says:

> "By the frontier we understand that place where life is lived most closely to man's need and God's purpose....It is the region where issues are clean-cut, where good and evil stand in sharpest contrast, where sunset and sunrise are seen and felt most keenly. In this twilight revolutionary time, this end of an era in which we live, the Christian Church is called afresh to a frontier life." p. 42
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> "Christ's supreme concern and place of action is....where the danger is the greatest, where the struggle is the fiercest, where the need of advance is most crucial, where new areas of life must be won for His kingdom. There He awaits venturesome spirits to rally to His banner." p. 67
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> "Wherever and whenever the Christian Church comes to believe that it can fully witness to its Lord by words alone, or by anything which can be fulfilled simply by speaking or writing, then the Church is apostate and has ceased to be the Church of Jesus Christ." p. 69

In defining the task on the frontier, Dr. Mackay says:

> "For the Church to stand with Christ upon this frontier, means to flash the light of His Gospel into the void, to interpret to men their predicament, to concentrate their gaze upon a Face that merits their loyalty, to summon them to become His disciples." p. 69

The Evangelical and Reformed Church is, accordingly, I believe, a mission. We believe it represents a good religious organization. There is mobility in its

life and in the use of resources at hand. But, at the same time, the people of our fellowship constitute a mission of very substantial dimensions with an annual operating budget of $720,000 derived from apportionment giving and special designations from interested church groups and individuals.

Ten young missionary candidates were appointed at the last meeting of the Board, which makes a total of about 120 either on the field or on furlough or officially in training. We therefore have one missionary for about 7000 members of the Evangelical and Reformed Church although this is not so large a ratio of overseas workers as we might prefer.

Overseas service deserves to be constantly magnified in our churches, seminaries, colleges, and homes so that the number of workers might increase in a way commensurate with the needs of our comtemporary world. It has never been more true than it is today that the spiritual vitality of a church's life is a corollary of its evangelistic outreach on a world scale.

The goal of the mission is to help build up a world community of God with men, and of men with God, through the fruits of the Holy Spirit, and the faith and obedience of men. The patterns of social life through which this community expresses itself will vary in accordance with the natural and cultural settings throughout the world; but the New Testament will not let us forget that the community of faith is basic and unitary rather than the pluralistic cultural patterns, important as these are as conditioning influences playing on man's inner life. The centrality of the community is the same either in a totalitarian or democratic environment. The Church is the community and the community is the mission. Let the Church therefore be the mission.

A Summons to Immediate Action

At the Cleveland meeting last November when the National Council of Churches of Christ in the U. S. was officially constituted with its eight major divisions, including the Division of Foreign Missions organized to continue the program of

the Foreign Missions Conference of North America, attention was given to a new research project on The Missionary Obligation of the Church in which study groups from various countries are now cooperating. This study on The Missionary Obligation of the Church is a phase of an overall study directed by the International Missionary Council on "A Summons to Immediate Action" aimed at formulating a crisis strategy for missions in order "to deal unitedly with the witness of the Church in relation to communism; the freedom and integrity of Evangelical Christianity in countries dominated by political Roman Catholicism; and the threat to the Church and the Gospel arising from new expressions of religious syncretism, often associated with some aspect of nationalism." Accordingly, all mission boards and agencies affiliated with the International Missionary Council and the Division of Foreign Missions are urged to give support to all efforts to find the best methods of service in these times of revolutionary social change and turmoil taking place in most lands.

By way of stressing the importance of having formulated now an adequate strategy for immediate action by the Christian world movement, Dr. Norman Goodall, secretary for the International Missionary Council in the London office said, "I doubt whether such changes that have taken place in the boards and their policies have been at all commensurate with the revolutionary changes which have occurred in the world in general and the Christian scene in particular. I believe," he continued, "that in the minds of most board secretaries (at any rate a little below the surface of their attention) there is uneasiness and uncertainty at this point. The great instruments are still being well used; many of the familiar policies and techniques are continuing to prove workable. There are jobs to be done and some resources for doing them, so you can go on and you can keep busy. But there is an uneasiness being kept at bay."

In the same address Dr. Goodall declared that in his observations many missionaries and candidates are "vocationally perplexed." Among student groups of

all nations, he said, you find "a profound concern about the meaning of vocation coupled with a strange absence of any distinctive imperative towards missionary vocation in its traditional sense."

What does this mean, we may well ask, for the world mission of the Christian Church? Will a fresh paraphrase of the old missionary appeal be adequate or are we running into the need for something more radical in the rational formulation of what is distinctively imperative in the world-outreach of our faith? Whatever the answer, I am sure that a philosophy of secular self-interest will prove terribly inadequate to undergird Christian vocation for this emergency era in which we are living and which is quite apt to last so long as any of us present today are alive. Perhaps we Board secretaries are at fault in making too many talks on the great work that is being done on our seven mission fields and not enough talks on the call that is in the spiritual need on our seven fields.

"We stand at the end of an age....an age that is breaking up in circumstances to which only the wisdom of God can give meaning, and the grace of God guarantee a future," said Dr. Goodall. We do well, I believe, to give heed to his plea that we be awar of "our need of a prophetic and apostolic word which, in fidelity to the eternal Gospel, in a God-given understanding of the signs of the times, will make articulate in this day of judgment that Command which is as wide as the world, and that Love, which is as vast as eternity." (So Long Thy Power Hath Blessed Us, p. 11ff)

The Three Challenges

Protestant Christianity today is being challenged and also threatened by three major social forces. The first is religious syncretism which claims that the living Christ is only one phase of divine truth and therefore is no way absolute with a claim on the soul of all men. It is pluralistic. We see it encroaching on the integrity of Christian faith by the older cultural religions that seek renewal through an alliance with aggressive nationalism. In China today, significant as Communism is in its own right, I am convinced that it is primarily the

religious overtone of a profound nationalistic and racial impulse. Jesus for the Party is only one voice among many used to sanction the drive of elemental instincts.

The second challenging and threatening force is Marxian Communism. Its supreme being is an impersonal principle of motion. The source of salvation is in the proletariat and the Party. The moral concepts derived by western civilization from the revelations of a God of righteousness and mercy are scorned. Through its interest in finding the ways for material improvement of the lot of mankind, it possesses enough divine truth to make it a heresy rather than pure evil. It is a challenge in so far as it seeks what is good. It is a threat in so far as it pursues its logical ways of enslavement for all and death for the non-conformist fringe.

The third challenge is to be found in the clericalism that is integral to the Roman Catholic view of the Church. Here we see a quest for political power by a religious hierarchy and for broad social domination through the use of secular methods. In some countries it is a threat because of its will to liquidate those who disagree. It is based on an institutionalism that holds the living Christ as the only source of salvation under a severe control.

These three social forces need to be well understood today, but this cannot be done in simple one-syllable terms only. Marxian Communism is perhaps the most complex in its dialectic logic which Dr. Charles Malik, Lebanon delegate to the United Nations, has described as follows: "...it is a tightly knit, rigid system of thought, permeated through and through, in its presuppositions, structure and conclusions, by the spirit of metaphysical monism, ethical and axiological relativism, self-centered, autonomous humanism, impersonalist collectivism, historical dynamism, and militant atheism." (Christian Century, January 17, 1951) The immediate goal of the world Christian movement is to find a way of peaceful coexistence for Communist theory and practice on the one hand and Christian faith

and service on the other until the divine powers of reconciliation have so terminated war, hot and cold, that the community of faith might exist without the constant threat of death.

The Message of the Mission

Never has it been more necessary for the mission to be sure of its message. Men must be re-habilitated as religious beings; and too often the missionary goes forth from a "culture that has lapsed from belief" to some culture of disbelief. The word of God must therefore be clarified and reclarified so that its pertinence is persuasive. The Church has nothing distinctive to give to the nations except the Word. Its ministries implement that Word as our missionaries so eloquently testify when mercy is extended in the Master's name.

Again I would refer to the theological writings of Dr. Mackay who, out of long experience as a missionary in Latin America, reaffirms the centrality of the risen Christ as God's supreme gift to man. "As the crucified one, Jesus Christ died for our sins; as the risen one, He is accessible to the approach of the meanest human sinner. He becomes the life of every true Christian; He is the living head of the Church; He is the supreme ruler of the nations." (Our Future As Protestants, Presbyterian Life, January 6, 1951, p. 8)

In Roman clericalism the living Christ is held in subjection by a religious institution in the search for political power by secular means. In Marxian communism, which controls the life of one third of the human race today, the Party has no judge of its ways in the living Son of God. If it is true as we are repeatedly told that the chief single issue in our world at this time is human freedom, then the world Christian mission has no more pertinent message than that of the risen Christ as conqueror of all those powers that enslave the souls and bodies of men.

Christians, The Church, and Communism in China

Future students of the history of Christianity will undoubtedly regard the present experiences of Christians in China as of very major significance. The

sufferings being endured will long inspire sympathy. Theologians and sociologists will find data in the present epoch of Christian life in China of far reaching effect on the total world Christian movement perhaps for centuries to come. A rebound from these experiences in resistance and in adaptation will have influence in unexpected ways in many lands.

For some of us, the recent ascendency of Soviet Communism in China with its violent disposition towards Christianity is not a new thing. We heard the Marxian bullets fly and were robbed with Marxian bayonets over our heads in 1927 at Nanking when a Communist inspired contingent in Chiang Kai Shek's army, which took over the city from northern forces, decided to embarrass both Chiang and the western citizens who were in Nanking at that time. So the present crisis has had antecedents with growing sinister effects.

I shall never forget a simple ceremony in Bailey Hall of Nanking University, March 25, 1927, when we were under siege in that building. Dr. Bowne resigned as the last missionary president of the University and the youthful Dr. Y. G. Chen confidently took over as president and until this day has continued as the efficient administrative head of the University. So, for almost 25 years, a Chinese leadership has been in the process of training for the present time as a result of the early Communist challenge of a quarter of a century ago. I am sure the present ordeals have not come as total surprises to the Christian leaders in China. In December 1946, at the General Assembly meeting of the Church of Christ in China in Shanghai, I heard Dr. T. C. Chao, now a president of the World Council, predict to his associates that within the next ten years from that date, even greater sufferings than they had already faced under Japanese occupation, might be in store for them. What Dr. Chao predicted late in 1946 came to pass in less than five years which illustrates the speed with which events take place in today's world.

The doors to China today are for the most part closed. All information received must be accepted with suspended judgment; yet the present situation can be

quite well understood in the light of available information of recent date. Freedoms initially granted by the People's Government are being progressively restricted.

At a recent meeting of a small study group convened to consider "The Missionary Obligation of the Church," to which reference has already been made, Dr. Stanley Smith who recently returned from Nanking where he has taught theology for about 30 years, spoke on recent trends in China under Communist domination. Dr. Smith reminded us that much of what is happening in China is happening also at other places in the world, and that we could not expect the Chinese to resent in Communism exactly the same things that the westerner most naturally resents. A high percentage of the people feel that they have nothing to lose by any change in government.

During the decade between 1920-1930, the prevailing theology taught in China was a liberal idealistic social gospel with a minimum of emphasis on the classical content of the Christian faith. With the arrival of Communism the basis for a true appraisal of its religious significance was lacking in the Church. Bewilderment has followed, and too often Chinese Christians have been quite unprepared for intellectual conflict in which the Marxian Communists are often very competent.

So, if the Church fails in having its evangelistic efforts in Asia rooted in the disciplines of Christian education in basic things, Christianity might easily serve only as a half-way house to Communism for many in search for better things. On the other hand, if the Christian evangelistic base is sufficiently broad and informed, Communism might very conceivably be a half-way house to Christianity for many who have already become sick of its cruelty, falsehood, and deceptive pretentions.

An encouraging result of Communist propaganda is a renewed interest among Chinese students in basic Christian thought according to Dr. Smith. Unfortunately the number of Chinese theologians such as Dr. T. C. Chao is very limited.

This is most tragic in a time like this when creative leadership in thought is so necessary to undergird the Church in the face of Communist taunts and ridicule flung at new converts to the Christian faith.

There are two types of churches in China: the so-called regular and irregular types. The regular types are represented by the denominational traditions implanted from the west. The irregular cult types are quite indigenous and spontaneous in their expressions of religious sentiment and feeling. They are of the proletariat and perhaps it is in them that the greatest degree of survival power exists today. They can quickly go underground and live as secret societies, for China is a land of many ancient secret societies.

The Church is often asked for its alternative to Communism. In reply it must be admitted that the Church has no distinct Christian alternative to Communism in the areas of political and economic theory, but it has a definite alternative, or perhaps we should say contrast, in the sphere of faith and moral judgment. An important task for the Church is to define social issues, where injustice prevails in terms of this faith and moral judgment before the Marxists define the issues in terms of their ideology. This would serve as an inoculation against the poison of a purely atheistic conception of social change.

From the base line of a Christocentric faith and moral judgment, the Church must help point out the consequences of existing policies, social goals and panaceas; help nationals develop Christian social procedures in the light of local circumstances that call for change; and, at the same time, have its own life constantly purified through partaking of its own medicine of repentance and rebirth. The need for justice and mercy in land reform, employment, health measures and educational opportunities must be must be met in creative and redemptive ways. Progress is possible through rational reformation rather than through ranting roaring revolution.

Given the broad significance of the crisis in China and its implications for other areas in Asia, I must make reference also to the famous "manifesto" document

apparently completed at Peking July 6, 1950, and published in September. The literal title of the "manifesto" is "The Path to be Energetically Pursued by Christianity in China within the Effort of a New China's National Reconstruction." The document is said to have been signed, undoubtedly under pressure, by 1500 Christian leaders as it was prepared by Chou En Lai, Communist Premier, and others as a basis of government policy. We now see that it laid the basis also for subsequent violent accusations.

In April of this year an additional conference of 151 Christian leaders was held at Peking when the pattern and policy for government imposed "accusations" was clarified. Since that time "accusation meetings" and accusation pronouncements have become more general. The psychology, intent and method of the "accusation meetings" merit study as illustrative of communist propaganda and social control strategy in their thrust at the heart of all attitudes of sympathetic understanding and tolerant reconciliation at the heart of the ecumenical position of the world Church.

Rev. Ward Hartman at Hong Kong begs us all to refrain from forsaking the Chinese Church and people in our prayers and sympathy. In fairness to Mr. Hartman and our other missionaries, this point must be strongly emphasized. One missionary behind the curtain writes, "It is of considerable satisfaction to me to undergo some small measure of spiritual trial along with the people of the church." Mr. Hartman writes, "Friends, beware lest we become accusers. But oh! Let us become leaders of groups of intercessors." There is no better counsel than this for use in closing our thought on this phase of the Church's task today where religious freedom no longer exists.

The Japan International Christian University

The most important single mission project before the Christian world movement today is the Japan International Christian University. It represents an ecumenical task that should be accepted in terms of honest cooperative financing, united sentiments, and a high Christian purpose so that it might be quickly

completed, apart from annual operating expenses, with opportunity for similar major projects to be accepted elsewhere in the future.

The front-line importance and urgency of the University has been well stated as follows by Dr. Walter M. Horton: "How long," he says, "has it been since a whole nation has been so open to the Gospel as Japan is at this moment? In such a world, the remaking of nations, societies, civilizations as well as individuals must become a conscious part of the missionary objective, and methods must be employed which have some likelihood, under God of converting the total life of a dying world order, and saving its soul for posterity, before its body sinks into decay." (Toward a Reborn Church, p. 33)

Our missionaries from India tell us that if it had not been for the influence of great Christian schools through the years, the new national constitution of that land would probably not have many of the admirable qualities that it now has for the support of human rights. Accordingly, the new Japan is now in a plastic formative stage when Christian education, on the advanced graduate level, will do much to shape the national life and create an atmosphere in which Christian institutions may freely exist and serve. The University will be a pioneer institution for educational reform in the light of Christian values as they pertain to major areas of the common life for which a new leadership is so earnestly sought.

There will be five vice-presidents, each at the head of a major division in the university program. Dr. Maurice Troyer, a vice-president and dean of the school of education, and a man of sterling Christian convictions, has described the University as "the most thrilling thing in America's post-war foreign relations." As ministers, we need to be thankful for young Christian laymen like Dr. Troyer.

A major asset also enjoyed by the University is in its President, Dr. Hachiro Yuasa, who should be better known to each of us. I have heard him speak often in committee meetings and have always been impressed by his personal Christian

qualities and abilities as an educator.

Prior to World War II, Dr. Yuasa was exiled by the military from Japan because he refused to hang a portrait of the Emperor above the Cross of Christ in the chapel at Doshisha University at Kyoto where he was president. Who would have thought at that time that in a dozen years he would be president of a great international Christian University with the strong backing of the Emperor and other members of the imperial family?

Dr. Yuasa was graduated from the University of Illinois in 1915 with the Ph.D. degree in science. He is one of the most outstanding Christian laymen in Asia today, and merits the confidence of Christian people everywhere. Let us sample his thought as contained in a short paper that he has written on "The Fellowship of The Cross." Dr. Yuasa says:

> "The Christian way of life can be entered only through the narrow portal of penitence, because in the beginning the tragic problem of human sin must be solved through Christ.....Christians have a long way to go carrying the burdens of humanity. We must, therefore, steel ourselves with Christian fortitude, remembering that to God a thousand years are as a day. We must travel light. Good soldiers of Jesus Christ cannot afford to be burdened with too many possessions or too much involvement, materially or spiritually....In the fellowship of the Cross is the hope for the reconciliation of a broken humanity and for the creation of the Christian world order."

Of the University, Dr. Yuasa says, "J. I. C. U. is a new venture with God for the supreme cause of His kingdom in Japan- and through Japan the Far East- an inspired expression of global strategy of Christian statesmanship."

There is much more at stake in the University project than may be realized here. A large part of the Japanese people have been led to believe that for a number of reasons, some perhaps quite intangible, that in response to their successful campaign to raise a half million dollars in Japan, a similar success would be demonstrated in the United States and Canada. Yet the opening of the University has been postponed; although with the recent rapid advance in the building program, the plan now is to open in April of 1952.

The University represents, and has represented, a goal that stirred the

imagination of many people on both sides of the Pacific. It deserved to do so. A great, disillusioned and broken nation, humbly pleading for a new leadership informed by Christian principles, is something not to be disregarded lightly. Historically viewed, its importance has been growing rather than diminishing in the past twelve months.

The Point Four Program

During the last week in April a conference was held at Buck Hill Falls by National Council representatives including those of mission boards to consider a strategy for the churches in relation to the Technical Assistance Program of the United Nations. It is to be remembered that at Lake Success last summer, fifty nations adopted a $20,000,000 budget toward which the United States will provide $12,000,000. The Economic and Social Council of the United Nations appointed a committee to formulate administrative policy. Accordingly, this program for overseas development, often called Point Four Program, is rapidly becoming a part of international policy of the free nations in general and of the United States in particular in order to improve health, agricultural, and educational conditions in undeveloped areas. A committee on technical cooperation with the government has been appointed by the Division of Foreign Missions of the National Council toward which most mission boards are at present making an annual grant from their home administration budget.

Given the Christian concern for people in undeveloped areas and the skills developed in past decades by missionary personnel, it was natural that mission boards should have been approached for a policy in relation to the technical assistance program of governmental agencies. In some sixty lands there will be a question of the relationship of mission undertakings with the technical assistance programs and especially so since Christian missions have been the pioneers in fostering the wide desire for a better life not only in terms of character and spirit but also in material terms as well. The findings of the Buck Hill Conference have been published by the department of International Justice and Goodwill

in cooperation with the Division of Foreign Missions of the National Council under the title, "The American Churches and Overseas Development Programs."

It is indeed encouraging to see the international concern for undeveloped areas of life. It is hoped however that in our zeal for the program the people of our churches do not regard it as a substitute for the basic mission of the Church. This would have a sinister effect on the habits of stewardship and the distinctive character of our faith in its evangelical outreach.

In so far as public technical assistance programs succeed, they will serve to make the task of the frontier missionary easier. On the other hand, if they fail, resentments will result in damaging repercussions. Moreover, it is possible that mission stations will suffer a large loss of trained and useful workers. The conflict between self interest and sustained commitment to the specific on-going Christian tasks will probably become increasingly sharp and clear. Existing mission efforts in Christian education and medicine will probably need to make adaptations requiring new resources, either from the people in the impoverished areas or from mission boards. Any so-called sectarian benefits enjoyed by a denominational mission in a favored position might easily prove a liability in the course of time rather than a pure asset.

It must be remembered also that technical assistance programs promoted by governments usually have implications relative to national and collective defence which might easily become a source of embarrassment for the missionary as a representative of the Church in its supra-national ministry.

Missionaries serve more and more within national church bodies as colleagues rather than independently and certainly as independent nationals. Their service is part of a large cooperative structure of world wide dimensions, including mission agencies of other lands and especially the younger churches and their National Councils. American missionaries would therefore want to have authorization from their national colleagues for participation in a public assistance program.

The experiences of UNRRA and other governmental aid programs are quite well known and remembered. Each new effort carries with it the possibilities of both good and evil results. A major educational job therefore faces mission boards and the home constituency in order to see what is involved in participation in public programs, in view of specific obligations inherent in any enduring program for the Christian world mission that dare not be forfeited in spite of any easy inducement to procure funds from secular sources. Either to ignore international idealistic efforts or to join unreservedly would be equally unwise.

While idealstic people everywhere will rejoice in the increase of international secular assistance on the part of governmental agencies, in undeveloped areas where mission work is already being done, yet it is obvious that it will mean an increased rather than a decreased obligation on the part of mission forces in order that they might do well their distinctive tasks. The missionary will need to remember the supra-national and non-governmental character of the Christian world mission. At the same time ministers may well note that special assignments will be available for Christian laymen with technical training for specialized service on a comparatively short-term basis. An established mission program does not always make such opportunities available for technically trained lay people eager to do frontier work on a short term basis, and whose services would mean much for Kingdom purposes.

Conclusion

The God of history is placing great demands upon the Church today in its world mission. No one has expressed the issue better than Dr. David D. Baker in one of the last editorials that he wrote shortly before the grievous loss that we all suffered in his untimely death. He said, "At a time when the world is in revolution, when the old shackles are falling, when the hopes of the masses are stirred by the strident slogans of false messiahs, where could the young man or young woman of Christian conviction better invest his life than right out there in the tumult?" If we make this need and challenge known, there will always be

those who choose to invest their lives accordingly. The Church has made causes available for men in keeping with the purposes of God.

Dobbs F. Ehlman